



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## Historical Commission Minutes 06-03-2003

Arlington Historical Commission  
 Minutes of the Meeting of Tuesday,  
 3 June 2003  
 Whittemore-Robbins House, 7:30 PM

Call to Order: Robert Botterio presiding, with commissioners Jane Becker, Pam Meister, Eric Stange, Michael Ruderman, JoAnn Robinson. Guests Cynthia Marsden and Gareth Williams of 35 Oak Hill Drive also attended.

Review of minutes of 6 May 2003: approved.

Communications Received: Mr. Botterio reported that the retiring town director of planning Alan McClennen will be feted here, on July 1, and all are invited to purchase tickets.

Window replacements to 76 Park Street were deemed to be less than 25% of the facade. Demolition of a garage at 82 Appleton Street may proceed without delay, as the property is not on the Inventory. The owners of 30-32 Addison Street (Project 5(g) below, Mark and Katy Pitts) have requested a plaque for their home.

Related Activities of other Town Boards (Historic Districts, Preservation Fund, Zoning, By-Law Review, Community Preservation Act Study Committee, Dallin Museum, others)

Ms. Robinson attended a meeting of the Redevelopment Board concerning the Time Oldsmobile/Osco site, and reviewed her notes.

Town Meeting voted down the opportunity to participate in the Community Preservation Act funding mechanism (levying a property tax surcharge, to which would be added matching fund from the state). Consideration of the Special Places enabling by-law is still on the table.

### Projects proceeding under Hearings and Approvals:

1167 Mass. Ave. (Mirak) 9/00: Botterio-no activity.

23 Maple Street (Town of Arlington) 11/00: Robinson-no activity.

35 Bailey Road (Weil): Botterio-done but for painting; exits agenda.

3-5 Brattle Street (Fertman) 4/02: Stange-no activity.

5-11 Water Street (Rowe, trustee of Waterpower Trust) 7/02: Botterio-window replacements proceed according to plan.

22 Brantwood Road (Blass) 1/03: Stange-work proceeding.

30-32 Addison Street (Pitts) 3/03: Ruderman-work proceeds, but certain discrepancies with the approved plan are appearing; Mr. Ruderman to confer with owner.

29 Academy Street (Benn/Becker) 4/03: Robinson-not started.

### Continuing Projects

Whittemore-Robbins House (and outbuildings): no report.

Arlington Civic Block Garden: Robinson-some difficulties encountered in extracting the fountains for repair.

Inventory Expansion and Review: Mr. Duffy related his conversations with the Survey Staff of the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The MHC considers and approves towns' submissions for inclusion in their historic inventories as they receive them, so there is always some delay between receipt and formal approval. Mr. Duffy asked for, and

was given assurances of, his submissions of the 1909 Symmes Hospital and 1918 Symmes Hospital Nurses Residence being placed at "the head of the list." Mr. Duffy said he was also submitting an article to the *Arlington Advocate* on the hospital. Finally, Mr. Duffy said he would be conferring with Academy Street residents wishing to be included in a newly-defined historic district.

Education/Outreach: see above.

Old Schwamb Mill: Ruderman-no developments.

Symmes Hospital redevelopment-Ms. Robinson will circulate copies of Mr. Duffy's research and historic-inventory submission forms to town offices.

## New Business

8:00 PM: Formal Hearing 20 Colonial Drive (Michael Manton, owner)

Mr. Manton presented a petition to apply vinyl siding to the three clapboarded sides of his home at 20 Colonial Drive. He plans to leave the brick front as it exists presently, as well as repainting the wooden shutters.

The subject property is located in the 1938 subdivision known as "Kelwyn Manor". Many of the 194 homes in this 39-acre development were designed by Robert Blasidell, who himself resided on Colonial Drive. The unprecedented scale of this subdivision, and the nearly uniform use of period Colonial Revival style, make Kelwyn Manor unique in Arlington's emergence as a suburban community.

Mr. Manton's home at 20 Colonial Drive, with relatively few exterior modifications to its design over the last 65 years, is one of the best surviving examples of Blaisdell's Colonial Revival style. Vinyl siding over the wooden clapboards would irreparably detract from the consistency of the design and the materials.

The commission therefore voted 5 to 1 against the petition to apply vinyl siding: Commissioners Becker, Meister, Stange, Robinson, and Ruderman in the majority; and Mr. Botterio in the minority.

8:30 PM: Presentation regarding 743 Massachusetts Avenue (Time Oldsmobile/Osco site)

Mr. Brett Donham, AIA, a principal of Donham and Sweeney Inc. Architects (Boston) led the presentation, on behalf of his client Collins Development (Michael Collins, principal). Mr. Collins' attorney, Mr. Richard Keshian, also attended; as did Mr. Richard A. Duffy (formerly of this commission, when he was our principle contact from 1998 on with the then-owners of this site, Osco and American Brands); Mr. Alan McClennan, Arlington's out-going director of planning, who was greatly involved in the previous discussions regarding this site's development; Mr. Howard Winkler, President of the Arlington Historical Society; and Mr. and Mrs. John Worden, he being the vice-chairman of the Arlington Historic Districts Commission.

Mr. Donham presented drawings and cardboard models of several possibilities for developing this site as approximately 45 residential units. Drivers would enter from Mill Street, park sub-surface beneath the residences, and exit onto Bacon Street. The sketches in particular show the design team's cognizance and consideration of traffic and parking patterns, pedestrian movement, proximity to the nearest National Register properties (St. Athanasius the Great Greek Orthodox Church, the Jason Russell House, and the Arlington Civic Block), and the Central Street and Pleasant Street Historic Districts.

All of the plans included ceding, either by deed or by easement, a portion of the premises to the St. Athanasius parish, upon which the church may rebuild and expand its community center. The plans also feature an opening in the Massachusetts Avenue-Mill Street streetscapes, opening site lines from approaching motorists from the north into the core of the development.

The mock-up of the "fourteenth iteration," as Mr. Donham styled it, appeared (in height, massing, arrangement of windows and dormers) to several viewers to resemble the Georgian Revival dormitories of Harvard College, from the Dexter Gate on Massachusetts Avenue at the rear of Widener Library west and north to Johnston Gate.

Materials and details are still to be decided (as are the final designs in toto) and therefore were not discussed. No commercial units are anticipated. A number of commissioners and audience attendees expressed concerns over the model's lack of doorways onto Massachusetts Avenue, and how this will effect the pedestrian environment.

9:15 PM: Discussion of Robbins Library entrance doors

Appearing were Library Director Maryellen Remmert-Loud, Library Trustee Frank Murphy, and Mr. William C. Dickinson AIA of Nashawtuc Architects, Inc. (Concord).

The 1993 renovations and expansion of Robbins Library moved the then-exterior doors to the interior of the principle entrance, Ms. Loud explained. They are bronze-clad (and suffering from corrosion), heavy, and balance-hinged; that is, they swing not from hinges at the butt edges but from fulcrum points closer to the midline of the entrance. When open, the total width of the entry is only five feet, eight inches, requiring the "push-and-go" automatic opening mechanism to operate both doors simultaneously. But, when the mechanism is engaged and the doors are slowly moving open, patrons can neither push them open faster nor pull them shut. So, the problems with the doors are two-fold: first, their deteriorating condition; and second, an operating mechanism (necessitated by their weight and size) that often battles against the public.

Mr. Dickinson proposed rebuilding the exterior doors in extruded aluminum, with "fancy" reveals and detail, much like the millwork moldings of the entryway, all to be painted bronze and butt-hinged. For the interior, he proposed new brass doors to fit the existing frames, butt-hinged and opening automatically on motion detectors. While it may not be possible to conserve the actual doors (Ms. Robinson's question), Mr. Dickinson said it would be easy to replicate their details in the new brass.

The commission voted unanimously (6-0) to concur in the Library's plans as presented, with Ms. Robinson to monitor, including reviewing the look and finishes of the doors before their final fabrication.

Next meeting confirmed for July 1 at 7:30 at this location, and this meeting closed at 10:00 PM.

For the Arlington Historical Commission,  
A. Michael Ruderman, Commissioner